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INDIA REVISITED:

ITS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

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BY

SAMUEL SMITH, M.P.

AUTHOR OF "THE NATIONALISATION OF THE LAND," "SOCIAL REFORM,"
"THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING OF DESTITUTE CHILDREN,"
"FALLACIES OF SOCIALISM EXPOSED," "BI-METALLIC MONEY,"
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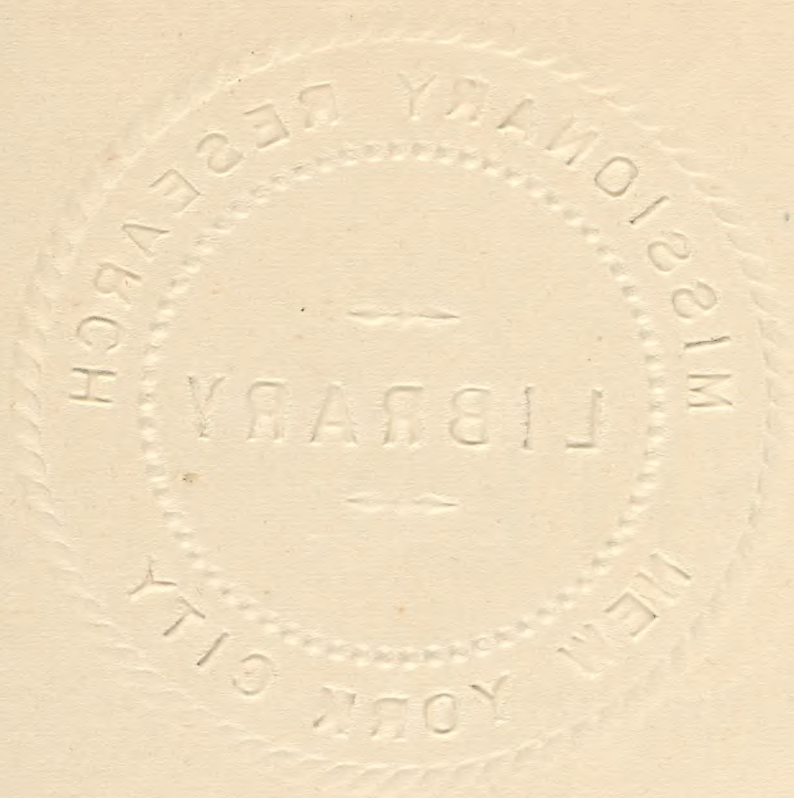
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I PAID a visit to India during the height of the American War, in 1863, to enquire into its Cotton-growing capacity. My travels were then confined to the Bombay Presidency. Since then I have had extensive commercial relations with the country, and have kept up an interest in its affairs so far as a busy life permitted. On losing my seat in Parliament last November, I carried out a long cherished project to revisit India and study its institutions more fully, and now venture to recapitulate the results of my enquiries. My course lay from Bombay to Calcutta, through the North-West Provinces, and my information was drawn from observation and contact with all classes of people. I associated equally with Europeans and natives, and especially sought to understand the views taken by the latter. I met many highly educated native gentlemen, and the information obtained from them is among the most valuable results of my trip. I also read the best literature I could obtain bearing on the present position of India, and I purpose in the following pages to summarise my principal deductions from the evidence brought before me.

I am well aware of the folly of pretending to sit in judgment on the government of India, after a couple of visits, separated by an interval of twenty-three years.

The vastness and complexity of Indian questions grow upon the mind increasingly, and the wider your knowledge the greater is your sense of ignorance. India is, in fact, a continent rather than a country—a congeries of races and languages, not a nation. What is true in one part is false in another. What is politic in the Punjaub is folly in Bengal. What is suitable for the North is out of place in the South. Consequently all generalisations are dangerous. To assert general laws for India is like laying down principles for all Europe. The frontier tribes differ as much from the Bengalees or Madrasees as Finland differs from Naples. Consequently great caution is needed in writing about India, and the difficulty is increased by the vehement contradiction one meets on every point of Indian policy. The views of the Indians and Europeans are often diametrically opposed. The official and non-official class differ widely from each other. Indian problems, looked at from the points of view of a native, a civilian, a missionary, or a soldier, are about as different as the starry heavens, looked at through the telescope of Newton or the eye of an ancient astrologer.

There is no agreement in India either upon facts or inferences. All statistics are disputed—all conclusions are questioned. A traveller no sooner ascertains what he thinks is a well-established fact, than he finds it vehemently disputed. He finds human testimony as unreliable as most of the evidence tendered before Indian courts of law, and he almost despairs of arriving at any valid conclusions.

This difficulty will not be felt by those who confine themselves to one class of opinion; for many travel through India with blinders, only seeing what official optimists wish them to see. You may remain entirely ignorant of what is thought by the 250 millions of people who inhabit the country. Nothing is easier than to dogmatise when

only evidence on one side is heard; but when an attempt to judge honestly is made, amid the Babel of contradictions one hears, the task is enough to daunt the boldest.

It is, therefore, with much diffidence that I offer some remarks on the strange phenomena of our Indian Empire, so unlike anything the world has ever seen, that no historical analogies give much aid in comprehending it.

I begin by observing, that the general opinion at home is that India is enormously indebted to British rule; that we have converted a land of anarchy and misrule into one of peace and contentment; that poverty is giving place to plenty, and a low, corrupt civilization to one immensely higher. It is somewhat of a shock to the optimist to learn that every one of these points is contested by well-educated and intelligent natives; instead of contentment, one finds in many places great dissatisfaction, and a wide-spread belief that India is getting poorer and less happy. Without at present controverting these opinions, I will offer some remarks upon the social economy of the country, which are necessary to any true understanding of Indian problems.

The first and deepest impression made upon me by this second visit to India is a heightened sense of the poverty of the country. It is greater and more wide-spread than almost any one in England realizes, and the most important political consequences follow from the recognition of this fact. I have taken some pains to form an estimate of the wealth of India, and have been startled at the result. The late able Finance Minister, Major (now Sir Evelyn) Baring, estimated the average income of the people at 27 rupees per head, say £2 0s 6d at the present exchange of 1s 6d per rupee; but as Indian accounts are all kept at the old rate of 2s per rupee, for the sake of comparison with former years, it may be reckoned as £2 14s per head per annum. That would give 540 millions

as the total income of the 200 millions* of people who inhabit British India. Our best statisticians put the aggregate income of the 36 millions of people who inhabit the United Kingdom at 1250 millions, or about £35† per head, against £2 14s per head in India. I must add, however, that the most intelligent natives I met put the income of India at less than those figures. Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, than whom there are few better statisticians in India, puts the average income at only 20 rupees per head, or 400 millions sterling for British India. These very low estimates are confirmed by much collateral evidence. The average rate of wages up country is from 2 to 4 annas for common labour, or say, at the former value of the rupee 3d to 6d per day—about a tenth of what is paid for the same class of labour in England. Then the income-tax tables show a marvellously small area of high incomes. It is well known that a penny on the income tax produces about two millions sterling in England, and the assessment commences with incomes of £150 per annum. In India the same rate, commencing with incomes of £50 per annum, but with some large exceptions (such as the native Zemindars, or land owners), produces rather over £200,000 per annum. The comparison is not at all an exact one, but, speaking broadly, I should say that an income tax in India only yields one-eighth, or one-tenth, of what it does in the United Kingdom, though the population is six times as large. The great complaints in many parts of India as to the pressure of the land revenue tell the same tale. The whole amount collected is 22 millions sterling, which is little over 2s per head of the population. It is hard to believe how so small a tax

* India contains, by the last Census, 254 millions of people, of whom 200 millions are in British territory.

† I incline to think this is too high, especially since the great fall in values that has recently taken place.

should press heavily; yet I fear it is an undoubted fact, that in the poorer parts of the country it is collected with difficulty, and in years of scarcity causes no little suffering. The produce of the land is extremely small, according to European standards, and I much doubt whether the entire agricultural produce of British India exceeds in value 300 millions sterling.

The fact is human life is supported in India upon the barest minimum of necessities; the village population feed upon the commonest grains, seldom eating animal food (which is contrary to their religion), and rarely tasting the finer grains, such as wheat and barley. The clothing worn is of the scantiest, and I was distressed to see many of the people in the North-West Provinces shivering and half naked in weather so cold that I was glad to wear two topcoats. The houses are built of clay, and almost destitute of furniture, and I understand that a large portion of the population only eat one meal a day. Of course this in an Eastern country does not signify what it does in Europe—life can be sustained on less food and less nutritious diet than in northern climes; the labour power of the Hindoos is small, there is far less taken out of the human machine than in our laborious western life; it consumes less and produces less; besides the Asiatic has the power of digesting a greater quantity of food at one meal than is possible to Europeans; but, when due allowance is made for all this, it is not to be denied that the poverty of a great part of the people of India is extreme and more acute than what we witness in Europe. It may be said with truth of a great part of the rural population that it is never far removed from famine. A scanty harvest any year brings that calamity within measurable distance; a failure of crops means death to a large part of the population unless fed by government.

A clear conception of the economical state of India is

essential to sound views of public policy, and to a right comprehension of what the natives think and desire.

I now wish to express as briefly as I can the objections taken by the natives to our system of government, and I remark in the first place that there is now an educated native tribunal by which our actions are closely scrutinised. This constitutes a totally new element in Indian problems as compared with former times. When the British acquired India they found a primitive but decaying civilization, and no education worthy of the name. They became of necessity the supreme power in the country, as they alone possessed the intelligence required for civilized government; but a new state of things has grown up owing to the excellent system of higher education we have planted in India these last fifty years. In all the important cities there are now first class schools and colleges—many of them the noble result of missionary enterprise—for be it remembered to their honour that the European missionaries were the pioneers of education. But the Government has now entered the field in good earnest; besides, many of the wealthy natives are contributing endowments and forming schools of their own, and an intense eagerness for Western knowledge is taking hold of the Indian people. You now meet in India many graduates of their Universities as accomplished as those of Oxford and Cambridge; not a few of their youth have visited England and Scotland and completed their education there, and they bring back to India our own habits of vigorous thought and criticism. An intelligent native public opinion, and a free native press, are now judging the governing class, and its policy is viewed from a very different standpoint to what the official Europeans and the British public are accustomed to take. I may add further, that in many interviews with the leading natives I was impressed most favourably with the fairness

and logical acumen of the Hindoo mind. There was no attempt to talk clap-trap, or to draw unfair inferences; there was a tone of moderation and willingness to look all round a subject which are characteristic of a well balanced intellect. When India becomes generally educated, as only the few there are at present, it will be an intellectual force of the first magnitude.

The general tone of educated native opinion is much less favourable than we could wish to the methods and results of British rule in India. I will touch upon some of the principal objections they urge against it.

They complain that it is much too expensive, and drains the country of its wealth. The administration of the country is, as every one knows, almost entirely in the hands of highly paid Europeans. The lower posts are mostly filled by natives. The scale of pay was fixed many years ago, to stop corruption and to attract a higher class of talent. It has effected both these ends.

The covenanted civil service, which supplies most of the high offices, is a body of able and upright men. With the rarest exceptions no charge of corruption is made against it, and it discharges its arduous duties with fidelity, and I believe in most cases with a real desire to do the best possible for the people. The scale of pay is not too high, judged by our English standard, and its effective power has been much reduced of late years owing to the fall of the rate of exchange from 2s to 1s 6d per rupee. In India salaries are all paid in silver, but most of the European officials have to remit home a large part of their income to maintain their families, for it is well known that the children of Europeans can hardly be brought up in India after the age of five or six. There is, therefore, in reality much grumbling, and not a little pinching, among the European official class at what is a virtual reduction of income.

But the matter appears wholly different when looked at from a native point of view. Their scale of living is immensely cheaper than ours. An income of £100 per annum counts for almost as much among them as one of £500 with us. They view with envy the salaries of the higher officials, and think they could replace them with native officials, who would be well paid at half, or quarter, their salaries. Then they hold that these salaries are not spent in India, as those of natives would be. A large portion of them is remitted to England for domestic expenditure there, and when the officials retire from service they draw a pension from the Government of India. This pension list is very large, and is looked upon as a drain upon the resources of India, not making due allowance for the equivalent that has been rendered in the shape of good service. Then the natives hold that the cost of the army—some 18 millions sterling, at the old rate of exchange—is very high; the European part of it—60,000 to 70,000 men—is extremely costly. White men require many comforts and luxuries in a tropical climate which they do not need at home. I suppose each white soldier costs nearly double in India what he does in England, and probably three or four times what the native Sepoy does, but the need of this is not obvious to the Indian mind. I do not find that many intelligent Hindoos wish to diminish the force of the army. They are alive to the need of being strong against foreign invasion, and they know that the nucleus of the Anglo-Indian army is the European force; but they think it is maintained at undue cost. Great additions have been made to its expense by regulations passed in England, and only suitable for the home army, but not needed in India. The pension list and non-effective charges are very heavy, and the natives complain that no army in the world costs nearly as much in proportion to its strength as the British army in India.

They also complain that in the division of the expenses between the Home Government and India the scales are not held fairly, and many items are debited to India which ought to be borne by England. This is a great grievance, and excites much discontent in India. It is the one point on which all classes agree ; European and Native alike hold that India is not treated fairly by the British Exchequer. There is no subject to which it is more necessary that the attention of the Parliamentary Committee about to be appointed should be directed, and unless ample opportunity be given for native evidence the whole truth will not be brought out. Then it is urged with much warmth, that India has been unjustly saddled with the cost of expeditions in which she had no interest. Much soreness is felt at the claim made for part of the cost of the Egyptian War, and for the recent expense of the expedition to Upper Burmah. If the British Parliament was aware how much indignation these exactions cause in India, it would revise its policy. It is not that the sums are so large in themselves, but it is felt to be unfair that a rich country should charge a poor one with the cost of wars about which it was never consulted, and in which it feels no concern. Speaking broadly, the native opinion is that British government is very costly. The expenditure has been creeping up year by year, till it now reaches 75 millions per annum (at the old exchange), and for many years past deficits have been the rule rather than the exception ; the national debt has been steadily growing, and is now about 160 millions, some of which, however, is covered by State railways and other public works.

It is right I should mention here that much misunderstanding exists about Indian finance. A large portion of the receipts of the Indian exchequer are not revenue in the sense of taxation—the railways are nearly all made either by the State, or under State guarantee,

and therefore their receipts are treated as revenue—the same remark applies to other public works, especially irrigation canals; and the large opium revenue may be said, in a certain sense, to be paid by China. The actual revenue raised by taxation in India is only some forty millions, of which fully half is from the land. The State in India holds a position to the land which has been sometimes described as that of landlord; but it is more correct to say that, from time immemorial, it has been held to be entitled to a certain share of the produce of the soil. If, then, we reckon the revenue from land as having some analogy to rent the scale of taxation appears light according to a European standard; yet it is not so in reality. It is impossible to shut one's eyes to the proofs of extreme poverty that meet one, and the universal complaint of the natives is that taxation is high under British rule. They generally assert that taxation is lighter in States under Native rule; and I was rather startled by the statement, frequently made, that the condition of the Ryots, or peasantry, was better there than in British territory. I am not prepared to offer any opinion on this point, as the evidence is so conflicting; it may be that the mode of raising the revenue has something to do with it. The ancient method in the Native States, still pursued in some of them, is to take a certain share of the produce; this has the advantage of distributing the burden fairly over good and bad seasons; the payment rises and falls with the yield of the land. In our territory Government exacts a fixed rent in money—a much lower one, our officers allege, than was charged in former times by the Native Governments—and this is levied without regard to season, except when there is such complete failure of crops that the general Government permits remissions to be made.

It is alleged, I know not with what truth, that the collection of the revenue in poor years often forces the

Ryot to borrow from the money lender, and that when he gets into debt he never gets out of it again. Certainly the natives all prefer the system of taking a share of the actual produce to a fixed rent; but how it is possible to work so cumbrous a system over so vast an area they do not clearly show. I think, if the truth were told, it would probably amount to this, that the natives in British India both pay more and get more than in the Native States. In the latter they have little or no education, few roads, few or no police, no sanitation, and few courts of justice—these are all expensive adjuncts of modern civilization; they exist in British India, they cannot now be dispensed with, nay they are sure to increase as civilization extends.

In our own country municipal rates and local burdens have immensely increased of late years; but this is owing to the spread of enlightenment and the requirement that Government (local or imperial) should do much that our forefathers did not think necessary. Every nation that advances from a primitive to a higher civilization passes through the same experience. India is becoming a civilized Government at a civilized cost. She complains of this because the masses do not as yet appreciate the blessings of civilization. The little rural communes, of which the great bulk of the Indian population is composed, would still, if left to themselves, be seed plots of cholera and small-pox; they would drink foul water out of polluted wells; they would vegetate as their forefathers did for thousands of years; but European energy is changing all this, and the process is costly. The Native States are slow to follow; in many of them the process has hardly begun; and no doubt the people, till they know better, prefer to live as their ancestors did. There are sections of the people of England to this day who resist the visits of the education officer and the sanitary inspector; if left to themselves, they would wallow in dirt and ignorance.

We need not be surprised if the people of India, with the languor and apathy that belong to all Oriental races, somewhat rebel against our restless progress.

I give this as a partial explanation of the statement often made to me, that the people in the Native States are better off and more contented than in British territory; but however this may be, there can be no doubt of the antipathy felt in India to further annexations of Native States. The annexation of Upper Burmah is very unpopular among the natives, and the reason alleged to me was that it shakes their confidence in our oft-repeated declarations that no further Indian annexations will be made. They fear that pretexts will be found to enter on a fresh career of aggression, and it should be well understood in England that no such course can be entered upon without giving mortal offence to the people of India, and destroying all faith in the pledges of the British Government.

I have said that the chief complaint which educated Indians made against our Government was that it is too expensive, and that it drained the country of its wealth. A few words upon this latter head.

The great increase of the foreign trade of India is regarded with pride by the British. It has grown from 18 millions 50 years ago to a total volume of 140 millions sterling, reckoned at the old rate of exchange. It is argued that this implies a great increase of wealth, and is a most striking proof of the material progress of India. The view taken by the natives themselves is widely different, and it is very important that it should be laid before the British public. It is held by them that the foreign trade represents the decay of native industries, and the payment of a heavy tribute to England. I will take the last head first.

The statistics of foreign trade show that India exports

much more than she imports, and this balance has been steadily increasing, till it now averages from 20 to 25 millions annually. Speaking broadly it may be said that India now exports 80 to 90 millions, nearly all agricultural produce, and imports about 50 millions of merchandise and 10 to 12 millions of treasure. She is in the position so ardently desired by the nations of Europe before the time of Adam Smith, when the chief advantage of foreign trade was thought to lie in a surplus of exports to be paid for in bullion. The clearer light of economical science in our days has dissipated this illusion, and we know well that a surplus of exports means a poor country, while a surplus of imports (as in England) means a rich country. The natives press this point against us; they argue that as India exports annually 20 to 25 millions, for which there is no commercial return, she is drained of her wealth to that extent. The case will appear even stronger if we consider that the value of the imports of any country includes the cost of carrying the goods, viz: freight and commercial charges, and consequently nearly every country shows a greater value of imports than exports. The United Kingdom, it is well known, shows an annual net surplus of over 100 millions sterling of imports, of which about half represents freight and the remainder interest on foreign investments. All European countries show a surplus of imports, more or less, and if India were only to receive the exact equivalent of her exports, she ought to import 90 to 100 millions, including bullion, in place of 60 to 70 millions as she does now, so that the real balance of trade against India appears to be some 30 millions annually. The question arises, how are we to account for this? Does it really represent, as some of the natives allege, an exhausting tribute paid to England?

We require to glance at the relations of the two countries in order to understand it. One great part of the work

done by the British Government in India has been to cover the country with a network of railways, and make several valuable irrigation canals. In most countries such works are done by private enterprise, but it was necessary, in the undeveloped state of India, that they should either be done directly, or be guaranteed, by the State; moreover the capital had nearly all to be drawn from England. India has little surplus capital of its own, and what it has can be invested at much higher rates of interest than prevail in Europe, and so it came to pass that the great bulk had to be borrowed from England, on which interest at about 4 per cent had to be paid in gold. The Indian Government has also contracted a large National Debt, say 161 millions sterling; part of it covered by public works, but the greater part, say about 100 millions, of the nature of our own and other national debts. The upshot of the whole matter is that upwards of 7 millions annually has to be remitted to England for interest by the Government of India; about as much more has to be remitted for pensions, military charges, stores, &c; making in all a sum of 15 millions a year for "Home charges." This represents the Government side of the account; but there is also a vast amount of private remittance from merchants and others in India who have capital employed or invested in that country. Most of the tea, coffee, and indigo plantations are worked by European capital, the foreign trade is nearly all so carried on, and there is much money annually remitted by Government servants for the maintenance of their families in England. When all these items are added together it is possible that they may amount to about 15 millions annually, and so account for this adverse balance of 30 millions in the trade account of India.

It will be seen that for most of this annual remittance India has received back a fair return. The railways and public works now yield an annual surplus to the Govern-

ment after paying interest, and the private capital invested in India is also highly reproductive, and gives employment and maintenance to many of its people; but there is another portion on which the benefit to India is not so conspicuous. I refer to the pension list and military charges in England, and the interest on the National Debt, contracted for warlike expeditions. It is not difficult to represent this as a burden imposed by a foreign power, and which India, if freed from British rule, could shake off. Matters have not come to that point yet; but it is easy to see, from the spread of anti-English literature and the influence of revolutionary thought coming in from Europe, that sooner or later such ideas will take root in India, and it becomes a grave question of policy whether it is wise for the Government to keep adding to the Indian debt held abroad. England has probably a stake of 300 millions sterling in India, in one shape or another. For much of that she has conferred a full equivalent in the shape of reproductive works; but, looking to the peculiar relations of the two countries, and to the fact that it is British rule which is the main security for the due payment of interest on this vast amount, one cannot but look with apprehension to the future. Were it possible to raise loans in India from the native capitalists, the solution would be much simpler; but at present that is impossible on any large scale.

I said that another reason why the natives looked with jealousy on the growth of the foreign trade of India was, that it was largely at the expense of their home industries. It is hardly realized in England, that our cheap machine-made goods have destroyed the bulk of the old hand-made manufactures of India. At one time a considerable part of the population was so employed. India now imports about 35 millions worth of manufactured goods, chiefly cotton cloth, hardware and pottery, which were once

made at home. If we allow £2 per head as the annual income of each person in India, the making of their goods must once have sustained about 17 millions of people. Now they are imported, no doubt at a cheaper cost, and according to the formulæ of political economy the labour and capital so employed can be turned to more profitable directions, and India be a great gainer; but it so happens that the hand-loom weavers and the small artificers who made these goods in this simple native fashion, and as a hereditary calling, had no other trade to turn to. The capital which was their trained handicraft was destroyed, and they had either to starve, or take up vacant land for farming, or become coolies. Most of them took to agriculture; but it was a hard struggle to live, for all the good soil was already taken up, and they had to reclaim from the jungle barren land, on which they could barely subsist. The general result has been to make India more than ever a country of poor peasants, with little variety of pursuits. Of course this process greatly increases the foreign trade. The people of India require to export a large portion of the produce of the soil, in order to buy their clothing and utensils, and another large portion to liquidate the "Home charges" and private remittances made to England. When thus analysed, it will be seen that it is futile to reckon increase of foreign trade as equivalent to increase of wealth; it is rather a substitution of foreign for domestic exchange. The food and raw produce are exchanged against the cloth and hardware of England, instead of against the products of innumerable small makers at home.

Yet there are some aspects in which the increased trade really means increased wealth. The railways have made many districts accessible which were not so before. Where surplus food was almost worthless, it now finds a ready market, and in times of scarcity and famine the

surplus of one part of India is quickly made available to supply the deficit in another part. No one can doubt that the railway carries with it both material and moral civilization. It tends to break up those foolish caste prejudices, which have been the bane of India for thousands of years, and it enables the whole produce of the country to find a ready market.

It must also be remembered, that though the old hand manufactures of India are dying out, they are being replaced by the improved methods of European manufactures. Bombay resembles a Lancashire town in the number of its smoky chimnies. It has nearly seventy cotton mills, fitted with the best machinery of Oldham, and paying much better dividends than similar factories do in England. The jute manufacturing trade is leaving Dundee for the valley of the Ganges, and no one can doubt that India will in course of time recover much of the trade she has lost, and compete with Europe on equal terms. Labour is so immensely cheaper than in England, and the natives are so quick at the use of their fingers, that I suspect it is only a question of time to transfer to India much of the trade of Lancashire. Already the Bombay mills have nearly deprived Lancashire of the trade with China in cotton yarn, and there are symptoms of still greater changes in the future. India is just now in a transition state. She has lost most of her primitive manufactures, and the change has been very painful, but she is acquiring the improved methods of Europe, and they will largely compensate her in course of time.

One more remark before I pass from the question of the value of India's foreign trade. It is often asked what has become of the huge amount of bullion that India has absorbed in recent years? She has received on balance some 350 millions sterling of silver and gold in the last forty years. What has become of it all? Many writers in

England hold that this is a great proof of wealth. It is not so regarded in India; it is extremely difficult to say what becomes of the money; no one could give me a satisfactory answer; it is apparently diffused over that vast population, either in the form of coin or ornaments, and shows little visible sign of existence; probably much of it is hoarded. There still remains in India the feeling of mistrust, burned into the mind of the people through ages of pillage and anarchy. No property is considered by the villagers quite secure unless it can be hidden. Banks and bank notes are very little used; the rupee has to perform the ordinary exchanges of 250 millions of people, and everything that can be spared is put upon the women in the shape of rings, bracelets, anklets, and other ornaments. Of late years a considerable part of the bullion imported—fully one-third—is in gold, and it is said that much of this goes into the Native States, where the rajahs and rich natives are fond of display. I doubt whether any safe conclusion can be drawn as to the wealth and prosperity of the masses of the people merely on account of this absorption of bullion; still it is undoubted that India has greatly replenished her currency as compared with the early part of the century, when it was deplorably scanty, and when the rudest means had to be adopted for the purpose of exchange.

Before parting from the subject of Indian trade, I would further remark that the natives strongly assert that England forces upon them a fiscal policy, unsuited for their country but adapted to develop British commerce; the system of taxation, they allege, is adapted to suit England rather than India, and this causes much heartburning and is a source of political danger in the future. The unanimous opinion of all who know India well is that it is not suited for direct taxation; the fiscal and economical canons of advanced countries like England are altogether untrue as applied to India. There are few greater dangers which

beset British rule in India than this tendency to apply crudely to it the latest deductions of political economy in England. Many of these, which are treated as axioms of universal application, are only true of highly developed communities, where the right of free contract and free competition has lasted for centuries, and where it has produced a robustness of individual type which is wholly wanting in India, as indeed it is in all Asiatic countries. It would be as reasonable to impose by main force upon India our religion, our laws of marriage and inheritance, our political and social institutions, as our economical and financial views. I can hardly sufficiently convey my sense of the danger as well as the injustice of so acting. Systems of law and finance which are quite suitable for the West may become the parents of as much oppression in the East as the worst abuses of despotism. Of all classes of people that endanger our Eastern Empire, the worst are the narrow pedants who apply cut-and-dry formulas of European thought without mercy to the complex and widely different civilization of the East. One instance, of many that might be cited, is the action of England as regards the repeal of the import duties. India used to raise a considerable revenue from these duties without the least complaint from the native population, but they were abolished in deference to the urgent remonstrances of Manchester, and since then the Indian Government in its extremity has been obliged to resort to taxes which are hateful to the population and injurious to their welfare.

If British India were polled to-day, there would hardly be one person out of its 200 millions who would not reimpose those import duties in preference to a further increase of the land tax, or the iniquitous liquor laws, which are rapidly spreading drunkenness among the people of Bengal, in order to supply revenue to the Government. The standing difficulty of the Government of India is how

to obtain revenue. The finances are always strained, and it is next to impossible to devise new taxes which do not oppress the people, or invade some of their deeply cherished customs. Now the import duties did none of these; they hardly added perceptibly to the cost of the articles imported; they carried no inquisition into people's private lives, and they did not afford opportunity for speculation, which most forms of taxation do in India. If India had representative government of its own, there is not the least doubt that it would draw much of its revenue from customs duties, like most other nations of the world. A tax of 10 per cent on imports of manufactured goods would yield three or four millions sterling, and enable it to dispense with the income tax, and most of the liquor duties. A tax of 20 per cent would enable it to reduce considerably the land assessment in those large districts where the peasantry are hardly able to exist, and where the collection of the tax in poor seasons often drives them into bankruptcy. It is not necessary that these duties should be protective; it would be quite easy to levy an equivalent duty on the produce of the Indian factories. England might justly complain of taxing her goods to build up competing manufactories in India; but if equal treatment were applied to all, she would have no reason to object.

One thing is perfectly certain—just as public opinion becomes enlightened in India, and the natives claim the share that justly belongs to them in the government of their country, they will shape its fiscal policy in a way suited to India, and not always agreeable to the commercial classes of England. The only true guide to our policy in this, as in all other matters, is to follow the course best for the people of India, without regard to the supposed interests, or prejudices, of the dominant country.

I will here allude briefly to the objections alleged by the

natives to an income tax. It seems to us most just that the richer classes should contribute more than they do to the government of the country. In India the weight of taxation falls on the poor, and it is difficult to devise any better means than an income tax to get at the rich. It falls on Europeans as well as on natives, and this is altogether expedient, for the Europeans draw a handsome revenue from the country, and have hitherto paid little taxation. The total number of people affected by the proposed income tax of 6d in the pound is only 300,000—a striking proof of the poverty of the country; and the amount expected to be raised is £1,300,000. All incomes above £50 per annum are to be assessed, with some important exceptions, as already stated. Now, the great objection of the natives is the power of oppression it puts into the hands of the lower native officials. The estimate of income is usually made by the lower officials of the revenue department, who are poorly paid, often uneducated and usually corrupt; so, at least, I was repeatedly informed by the natives themselves. They told me that the only principle on which a native was assessed was the amount of “backsheesh” he was willing to pay. One man would be put at ten times the amount of another, unless he paid blackmail to the assessor. It was impossible for the European supervisor to overlook the innumerable details of such a tax; hence endless opportunities for speculation and fraud. This is the inherent objection to all systems of direct taxation in India. An army of ignorant, poorly paid native subordinates must be employed to enforce them, and it is wholly impossible to prevent extortion and robbery. No one trained in England can imagine the extent to which this takes place in India, as in all Asiatic countries, and the true method of taxation is that which reduces this evil to a minimum. Much of the same objection applies even to the land revenue when the time

for revising the settlement arrives. It is well known that most of the land of India is periodically re-assessed every thirty years. When that time approaches uneasiness almost amounting to panic fills the minds of the rural population. If the revenue officer happens to be a severe man, or the Government to be hard up for money, a large extra assessment may be the result. Then arises the danger of widespread corruption; the army of native officials that is needed to survey and value the millions of small holdings—often not more than four or five acres in extent—hold the fortunes of the cultivators at their mercy. All sorts of pressure are exerted to squeeze the helpless peasantry, and I feel strongly convinced, from much of what I heard, that far more is taken out of the pockets of the Ryots than reaches the Government in the shape of revenue. The chief district officers, who are always Europeans, do their utmost to check this, and if they are able and vigilant men, and move freely among the people, they may succeed to a considerable extent; but I fear there is more leakage than is generally suspected, and so harassing are these re-settlements of the land that I greatly doubt the wisdom of disturbing old arrangements when working fairly well.

I will again refer to the Indian land system. My present object is to illustrate the inherent difficulties of all kinds of direct taxation in India, even so simple and ancient a one as the land tax. They all require an army of collectors, they all involve an inquisition into a man's private affairs which is far more hateful to Asiatics than Europeans, and above all they afford unbounded opportunity for speculation and oppression. All these vices are rampant in the Native States. They existed in India on a gigantic scale during the age of Mahomedan rule, and in spite of the best efforts of the English officials, who are as a rule incorruptible themselves, they still exist, I fear,

to a greater extent than is suspected. I could not otherwise account for the bitter complaints I heard in some places as to the exactions for land revenue. I emphasize this subject more fully, for I foresee that one of the great dangers of the future is in forcing on India the fiscal and economical maxims of England, for which she is quite unprepared.

It is now time that I should deal with the remedies which the educated natives propose for these defects of British administration. I was surprised to find so general an agreement both as to the evils and the remedies. At Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, as well as in the interior towns, I found something like solidarity of opinion on the main lines of reform. They were agreed that the chief defects of British government were its costliness, its tendency to subordinate Indian to British interests, and its exclusion of the natives from most of the leading and highly paid posts of the government. At some points I found more bitterness of feeling than at others; probably race antagonism has reached its maximum at Calcutta and its minimum at Madras; but no where did I find much violence or unreasonableness of opinion, nor any considerable trace of what may be termed active disloyalty. The educated natives have no desire to get rid of British rule; they admit it has conferred many advantages on India; they know that the elements of anarchy would soon burst out afresh if the strong hand of the European were withdrawn; and, above all, they know well that India would soon become the prize of some foreign invader if her weak native races were left to themselves. What they wish is not to overthrow British authority, but to mould it into a truer Indian form, and above all to get a substantial share of the administration, and an effective voice in determining the policy of the Government.

Up to the present time it may be said that our

Government has been a paternal despotism. We have ruled India by means of a European Bureaucracy, recruited from England through the "Covenanted Civil Service," and largely supplemented in India by appointments made from the army through the staff corps, and from outside civilians usually styled "uncovenanted." A few thousand British officers, partly civil and partly military, administer the affairs of India, subject to the general supervision of the Viceroy and local Governors sent out from England, and, in the last resort, to the Secretary of State for India aided by his Council at home.

It will be seen at a glance, and without descending to details, that the natives of India have very little power of influencing the policy of their own country. The excuse offered has been that they were not fit for it, and before English education entered India there was much to be said for this view. Certainly, in the earlier days of British rule, it was impossible to govern, except through an autocratic and military form of government. The country was then full of freebooters, thugs, or professional murderers, and dācoits, or professional robbers, whose trade was to live by plunder, and nothing but the strong hand of a centralised and arbitrary Government could keep the peace.

But matters have greatly altered of late years. Education is coming in with a flood. English ideas of liberty and political right are spreading fast. A free native press, of considerable ability, is growing up. Besides, the country is becoming ripe for a more gentle and constitutional mode of government. The old robber tribes have died out, or become converted into peaceful husbandmen. No country in the world is safer to live in, or travel in, than India. I do not deny that elements of disorder, and serious ones too, still survive, of which more hereafter; but, speaking generally, the time has come for an

extension of the political rights of the natives, and a larger admixture of the best of them in the government of the country.

The main reform upon which the natives insist is the election of representative members to the Legislative Councils of India. Each local Governor has a Council, and so has the Viceroy of India, but their powers are not very extensive, and they can be over-ruled in case of need. The main power rests with the executive, which is wholly European; yet the natives do not at present propose to limit the authority of the executive, but they wish to make their voice fully heard in the Legislative Councils, and they claim the power of discussing the Budget and of interpellating the Government on questions of executive administration.

It may be replied to this, that a certain number of native gentlemen are already "nominated" to the Legislative Councils by the respective Governors. This is true, and the selections made are usually from the heads of the native communities; but it is said with truth that men who owe their position to the favour of the Governor are not so apt to be independent, or to represent truly the feelings of the people, as those who are directly chosen for the purpose. They are also few in number, and are easily over-ruled by the official members. I must say that I think the native view is reasonable. Representative members would make native opinion felt to the real advantage of the Government. It is often in the dark as to what the natives actually wish, and sometimes makes mistakes through ignorance. Indeed, there is much misconception on both sides. Native criticism is often unjust to the Government, from not understanding either its motives or its actions. There is a want of mutual understanding, which closer contact would dispel. I think the time has come when this moderate demand might be

safely conceded. It may be objected, that the difficulty is to find an electoral body. Certainly the mass of the people of India have not as yet the faintest idea of representative government, but there exists in all the large cities the rudiments of an intelligent electorate. They have now, thanks to Lord Ripon, a scheme of municipal government in operation, and these Town Councils, which are working fairly well, might elect the representative members to the Legislative Councils.

There also exists in India a considerable body of University graduates, which is rapidly increasing, and this would also afford a basis for an intelligent body of electors. There is no insuperable difficulty if the principle be admitted; and it is the one urgent reform which all educated natives demand, and I believe it is as much in our true interest as theirs to grant it. I did not find in India so strong a desire for representation in the British Parliament, as for a voice in the Indian Government. The natives are much impressed by the difficulty of getting English constituencies to return Indians; yet many of them feel the great importance of having spokesmen of their own in the House of Commons, and it was a great disappointment when they heard of the defeat of Lalmohun Ghose at Deptford. He would have been an able and useful representative of Indian opinion in Parliament; and certainly it is most desirable, when Indian questions are under discussion, there should be representatives of the views held by the native population, as well as those of the official class of Europeans, who are always well represented in the House. It cannot be too well known at home, that there is a wide divergence between the official and native opinion of India, and not a little friction between them. The impression of the natives is, that the English officials stand between them and their just rights and claims. They think that they

keep all the high appointments for themselves and their relatives, and do not carry out the principles of the Queen's proclamation, when the old East India Company was superseded. In that proclamation it was stated that no distinction would be made between race, colour, or creed, but that equal privileges would be given to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects. They allege that this principle has not been acted upon, and that the chief hindrance has been the opposition of the European official class. I am not giving my own opinion on this question, but am stating what I found to be a universal grievance among the natives, and it is one that must be dealt with if we wish to keep India loyal in the future.

Now it is a remarkable fact, that no such complaint is made of the British nation. There is a strong belief in their justice and good faith; and the constant desire of the Indian people is to get access to them, in order to lay their complaints before that august tribunal. They fully believe that if the British Parliament and people were made acquainted with their grievances they would remedy them. It is almost touching to see the simplicity of their faith; and certainly I do think it is well worthy of consideration whether we could not devise some constitutional way by which India might find legitimate expression in Parliament. The most practical means suggested to me was, to give a representative to each of the three Presidencies, through their Universities; the electoral body would then be the graduates of those Universities, than which no better exponents could be found of the aspirations of educated India.

In close connection with this lies another reform urgently demanded by the natives. It is in the constitution of the Indian Council in London. That body it is well known was appointed at the time the government of India was taken over by the Crown, in order to assist

the Secretary of State for India with a trained body of advisers. It numbers fifteen, and is composed of eminent members of the Indian Service on their return home. Originally it seemed well fitted for the end in view. The Secretary of State for India was often inexperienced in Indian affairs; and could exercise no efficient control over the complicated machinery of Indian administration without the guidance of experts. This Council supplied the needed guidance, and no doubt has prevented many blunders being made; but it has the defect of accentuating the Bureaucratic government of India, and strengthening those very traditions to which the Indian people are opposed. It prevents that free criticism of the methods of government which is indispensable for the removal of abuses. It is too much like an appeal from Cæsar to Augustus, from the acting Bureaucracy in India to the retired Bureaucracy in London. All classes in India object to the constitution of the Indian Council. The Europeans allege that it stereotypes past methods of government, even when these are discredited; that it is behind the age, and a drag on modern progress. The natives allege that it is a deadly bar to their advancement, and prevents the Secretary for India knowing the true wishes of the people. Their desire is to abolish it altogether, and to have instead a Standing Committee of Parliament to supervise Indian affairs; if that be not done, they wish the admission of a native Indian element on the Council. It seems to me that this last request is the most practicable. It is impossible for the Secretary for India, in our ever-shifting political arena, to have a real hold of the reins, without the aid of an experienced Council; but it is equally true that this body can never do full justice to Indian opinion without a native representative element. I understand that in the original draft of the Council, by the then Mr. Disraeli, there were

four places reserved for natives of India: if so, it was a piece of true statesmanship, and had it been acted upon some mistakes we now deplore (such, for instance, as the last Afghan War) would probably not have occurred; but it is not too late to remedy it now. It would be a graceful concession to the Indian population to act thus, and elect a certain proportion of the Council by some means which would give a genuine representation of the best native opinion, and I think that the number of seats placed at their disposal should not be less than five, or say one-third of the Council. I believe it would be of great importance that the Secretary of State for India should have this ready means of acquainting himself with Indian opinion, and, when necessary, of laying it before Parliament.

If these three reforms could be carried out—viz.: Representation of natives by election on the Legislative Councils of India; the return of a few Members directly from India to Parliament; and the election of a proportion of the Indian Council in London by the natives of India—I believe great good would result. We should have a true knowledge of what India wants, and our policy would be moulded into forms far more acceptable to the people than it is at present. Nor are those reforms in the least revolutionary. They proceed on the old English lines of gradual progress, and in the direction of representative institutions which England, the mother of free parliaments, must act on, all the world over, if she is to be true to herself.

Next to these points—indeed I may say in the same category with them—is the demand that the Civil Service should be opened, on fairer terms, to the natives of India. As matters stand at present, it is next to impossible for natives to pass the examinations in England, which are indispensable for entering the covenanted Civil Service. The age was lowered some years ago, when Lord Salisbury

was Indian Secretary, from 22 to 19. There may have been some good reasons for this, but it practically closed the door on native candidates. A small number had made their way into the service at the older age, in spite of the great difficulties of coming to England and struggling through the medium of a foreign language; but when the age was lowered to 19, it was found virtually impossible to get Indian youths pushed through their education in England in time to compete, and so now hardly any natives enter the covenanted Civil Service. It is true that certain appointments are filled up in India from natives, who are selected for fitness, and classed among what are styled "statutory civilians," but the higher appointments are reserved mainly for the covenanted Civil Service, which is recruited from England through the channel of these annual examinations. Now, the view of the natives is, that if the Queen's proclamation is to be honestly carried out, and equal facilities given to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects to rise in her service, there should be entrance examinations in India, as well as England.

In that case the youth of India would not have the enormous disadvantage of crossing the seas, contrary to the teaching of the Hindoo religion, and competing through the medium of a foreign tongue. One cannot but feel there is weight in this argument, and it is clear that in some way the entrance must be made easier for the natives. I think few who understand all sides of the question would consider it prudent to open the door so wide, that an examination in India would fulfil all the purposes of one in England. Statesmen must face the consequences of their acts, and not act blindly on abstract principles. The youth of India mature more quickly than those of Europe. An Indian lad is developed at 16 as far as a European at 19, and he much sooner reaches his full

powers, and has much less outcome in after life. Then the memory and imitative powers are very strong in the Indians; but original faculty, and resource in times of difficulty, are much weaker. The fact that a handful of Europeans govern India is proof that they are a much stronger race. The easy conquests of the Hindoos, by repeated hosts of Mahomedan invaders from Central Asia, shows that the race is deficient in martial qualities, and the mere addition of European education does not change their essential character. The quickest of the Indian races are the Bengalees, and they are also the softest, and would be the first to fall under the rule of stronger races if British power were withdrawn.

It would never do to place the government of India in the hands of the weakest races of the Indian Peninsula, simply because at school age they have the quickest memories and can cram more easily than a European. If entrance to the Civil Service were to be on precisely equal terms in India as in England, in course of time the bulk of the posts would be filled by natives drawn from those races which have never been dominant in the Peninsula, and who would not be obeyed by the stronger and more martial races, such as the Sikhs and Mahomedans in the North. This principle of entrance by examination must be cautiously applied, but undoubtedly it must be extended so as to facilitate the admission of a larger number of Indian youth. It was a great mistake lowering the age for examination. An increasing number of natives possessing force of character were entering the Service, and the necessity of coming to England operated as a sort of guarantee for personal energy. The education given in England imparted a higher conception of life, and put, so to speak, backbone into the Hindoo character. The successful competitors were not unworthy to enter on the race on equal terms with English-born youth. The very

minimum of justice that can now be done is to restore the age to where it stood before. It would be better for the Service in every way that older and more experienced men should enter it. At present the youth who go to India, even after their two years' further education, are little more than boys, and they are suddenly put to duties requiring knowledge of life and experience of men, such as discharging magisterial duties in the Interior. It is one of the crying evils of our system of government that such extensive powers are committed to mere youths. The discipline of human life, and experience of the world, are more valuable than any literary acquirements for the task of an administrator, and it would be much better that they should enter on their responsible duties somewhat later in life.

Nothing strikes a visitor from England more than the youthfulness of the Indian administrators. Duties are performed in India by men of thirty which devolve upon men of forty or fifty at home, and by the age of forty they fill posts of extraordinary power and responsibility, such as with us only fall to the lot of elderly men of ripe experience. It would be a distinct gain to the Service if all stages could be pushed back a little. At present civilians may return on full pension after twenty-five years' service, of which twenty-one must be passed in India; the result is that India loses the services of many men in the prime of life, say about forty-six. Of course the climate is very trying and enervating—many break down and many die before that age is reached; but where there are strength and vigour, as one sees in many, it is doubtful policy to encourage such early retirement. Any change that tends to bring into the Service and keep there men of riper years would be a distinct gain to all concerned. But a mere change of age for the competitive examination in England will not fully meet the native

demand for justice; they feel it is due to them that at least a portion of the appointments should be competed for in India, and in order to get the benefit of English training they are willing, and indeed propose, that their youth when successful should spend two years in special training in England, as our own successful candidates now do. Some compromise on this point must be arrived at. Perhaps it may be desirable to give certain appointments to natives of the numerous provinces of India by examinations conducted in those provinces, and restricted to natives of them alone, that so the difficulty may be avoided of all the prizes falling to the races with the quickest memories, but deficient in backbone and force of character. Certainly the Punjaubees are a much sturdier race than the Bengalees, but would be easily beaten by them if cramming were the only test. Our object should be to get the strongest and most upright men for administration, and to do substantial justice to the various races of India. Some plan of this kind ought to be adopted. There are special posts for which the natives are peculiarly qualified, such as judicial ones. There are now some excellent native Judges, admitted by all to be equal to Europeans. The Indian mind has much legal acumen, and there is room for a large extension of native agency in this direction. There are other appointments, again, requiring rather practical powers and force of character, for which Europeans are better fitted. The weakness of the Hindoo mind lies in hair-splitting and subtle distinctions; and a European who can neither write nor speak so fluently will often be a safer and better administrator. Then it is beyond doubt that the English conception of truth and honesty is much higher. The lower native officials are constantly charged by the educated natives themselves with being corrupt; but they allege that this is owing to their being uneducated and

badly paid, and they allege that this vice will not be found in high class men who have enjoyed English education, and are well paid. There is truth in this view, for most of the few native officials who fill high posts, such as the Judges of the High Courts, are admitted to be pure. There is such a thing as *esprit de corps* in all professions, and if natives are judiciously mixed with Europeans in the highly paid services, especially after being in England, they will generally imbibe the same honourable ideas.

The true policy of Government would seem to be to make appointments according to fitness, and a chief element in the fitness must be honesty and force of character. When that is found wanting, neither native or European should be chosen. It is unhappily true that black sheep are sometimes found even among European officials. I fear there can be no doubt that the natives believe that some of them are not immaculate. Nothing could be more fatal to our predominance in India than the spread of such a belief. Prestige, in its best sense, counts for a great deal in India. We hold our position there because in the main the natives believe us to be upright and courageous. They bear with much that is distasteful to them so long as they see we possess these imperial qualities; but let that belief disappear and no force that we possess will hold India. It is therefore of the highest importance that where well founded suspicions of corruption exist the natives should have the power of interpellating the executive, and demanding an enquiry. It is clear that if we object to the large introduction of the native element on the ground of this danger, we must, like Cæsar's wife, be above suspicion. Before passing from this branch of the subject, I would remark that the posts most exposed to this temptation are those of Residents at native courts. The semi-independent princes, who still rule over fully fifty millions of natives, all have British

Residents attached to their courts, who enjoy large powers, and supervise their foreign relations. At most native courts corruption and bribery are matters of course; and unless men of stern principle are selected for these posts, influences not of the highest are sure to be brought to bear upon them. It is in this direction that native suspicion points; and it is here that strict watchfulness must be observed if the British name is to maintain its proud position.

I cannot forbear adding here, that, in the opinion of many, the Civil Service is not what it once was. It is alleged that a rougher and less gentlemanly class of men enter it than in the old days; that they take less interest in the natives of India, and aim more at saving money and leaving the country with their pensions as soon as they can. The natives allege, with some truth, that the Europeans do not settle in their country, or in any sense make it their home; that they are mere birds of passage, and have not even the same interest in the country that the old East India Company's servants had. The facilities of communication with Europe, and their frequent furloughs, lead to constant coming and going, and keep up in the minds of the official class the feeling that they are exiled from home, and must return as soon as possible. The old East India servants seldom visited England, and often lived and died in India, making it their home. All that is changed now. The European officials have usually their families in England, and their heart is there, and they count the days till they can see them again. The natives complain that this gives a provisional and ever-changing character to British administration; that it lacks stability, and is not adequately identified with the country, and it is one of their strongest reasons for holding that we must gradually replace European by native agency, as fast as the people are educated up to it.

Another complaint which they make of our system is that the officials are incessantly shifted from place to place, and seldom remain long enough to gain personal knowledge of the people. Sometimes a grievous mistake is made by the arbitrary decision of an official; but he goes to another place before he is made to feel the consequences of his error, and so the sense of responsibility is weakened, and there is no effectual check against proved incapacity. In times of scarcity or famine a mistake made by a district officer may cost the lives of thousands of people. A wrong view, taken at headquarters, as happened once in Orissa and once in the North-West Provinces, may cost the lives of millions, as it did in both these instances; yet from the constant shifting of officers these terrible lessons do not produce their proper fruit. It is hardly possible to say who is to blame when gigantic mistakes are made. The pieces on the chess-board are always being moved from place to place, and an impersonal "department" hides behind an impenetrable veil the mistakes and even the grave faults of individual officers.

Unless we take into account the whole working of the bureaucratic machinery of the Indian Government, we shall not do justice to the native complaints of its inefficiency. Neither shall we recognise how right it is that a larger devolution of its functions be laid upon the natives themselves. Hindoo officials have no families to support abroad; they prefer living and dying in their own native place; they invest their savings at home, and the wealth that they acquire fertilizes their country. It is no wonder, therefore, that they call for a change in our system, and though it be true that this change can only be made gradually and with many precautions against abuse, yet it is certain to come, and it is far better that it

come with a good grace from ourselves, than be wrenched from us, as it may be in some time of sore trouble.

Before parting from this branch of the subject, I must refer to one more complaint brought by the natives against our administrative machinery. I allude to the annual migration of the Supreme Government to Simla during the hot season, and of the local governments to their respective hill stations. This practice only commenced in the time of Lord Lawrence, but is now an integral part of our system of government. The hot weather lasts for six or eight months, and is very trying to Europeans; the atmosphere of the hills is delightful and bracing, and enables white men to enjoy much better health, and to perform more work than is possible on the plains. After the death of Lord Dalhousie, Lord Canning and others, due very much to the effects of climate, it was found that it was not safe to send middle aged men from England to live in such a climate as Bengal during the hot season, especially when railways had brought the hill stations within easy reach, and the important decision was taken to make Simla the seat of the Viceroy during the hot weather. The local governments soon followed suit, and the chief officials went along with them. Delightful summer abodes now crown the various hill stations of India, and those who resort to them enjoy an improved European climate, even under a tropical sun. Yet this salubrious change is not without grave drawbacks: it removes the high-class Europeans from touch with the native population, and surrounds the Viceroy and governors during more than half the year with an exclusively official element. At a conference I had with the British Indian Association at Calcutta, it was likened to Mr. Gladstone directing the policy of England from the Riviera; the comparison is by no means far-fetched. The whole tendency of such a life is to isolate the

governing class from the governed; as was once said of the House of Lords, "they are up in a balloon," and out of sound or hearing of common humanity. It also leads to the great multiplication of written reports. Government being removed from contact with the district officers, a voluminous correspondence has to be kept up, and matters often occupy months of discussion which might be settled in a few minutes "*vivâ voce*." I heard on all hands of the enormous increase of report writing in India, and of the pernicious effect it had on the usefulness of the district officers; men who should be moving about among the natives, seeing with their own eyes and hearing with their own ears, were tied to their desks all day, filling up reams of paper with lengthened despatches.

The practice of despatch writing has grown to be a fine art in India; but, as it has grown, so has the far more important practice of moving about in the districts and keeping touch with the natives declined. In the old East India Company's days there was far less letter writing, and more personal intercourse with the natives. In trying to supervise the action of district officers, we have gone to the other extreme, and reduced our officials too much to the level of clerks of a Government department. The personal touch of a strong man counts for far more among Asiatics than with us; and, what with the hill stations, and endless despatch writing, the European chiefs are becoming invisible to the natives, and losing that magical power of personal influence which distinguished our early administrators, and helped not a little to create the Empire.

I pass now from questions of political and administrative reform to some other aspects of Indian life, the knowledge of which is essential to sound views, even on matters of policy. You may draw any conclusions you like in India if you limit the scope of your induction. You may prove

to your own satisfaction that the British Government is the most perfect ever devised by man, as some official optimists actually affirm, or that it is the worst form of oppression ever invented, as others have sought to impress upon me. Either side can quote a certain class of facts which give plausible colour to their conclusions, but each leave out of view another large class of facts which vitally affect the result. An induction is only sound when it takes in all the phenomena, and the material and social phenomena of India are so different from those of Europe, that no opinions are worth anything which are not founded upon a general knowledge of them. The material condition is the first I will refer to, though it is true that at every point it is interpenetrated by the social and even the religious phases of Indian life. India is almost exclusively a country of rural population and agricultural industry—only $5\frac{1}{2}$ millions of people live in towns of over 50,000 inhabitants—nine-tenths of the people live in rural villages of a few hundreds of population, and subsist almost entirely on the products of the soil. One Indian village is almost an exact copy of another. All the people are divided into castes, and each follows its own pursuit, from father to son. One caste, or profession, is not allowed to pass into another. The “hereditary principle” rules supreme among the Hindoos. It is somewhat different with the Mahommedans, but even they have adopted many of the Hindoo ideas. Two great systems of land tenure divide the soil of India—the Zemindary or landlord type, and the Ryotwary or peasant type. Lord Cornwallis, with the best intentions, stereotyped the Zemindary system in Bengal by giving to the middlemen or farmers of the revenue permanent rights of possession, subject to a quit rent to the Government. He failed to take effectual care of the multitude of small peasants who tilled those estates, and who, under ancient Hindoo law,

had occupancy rights akin to what we have conferred on the Irish tenants. Consequently there has arisen in Bengal precisely the same difficulty which has so long afflicted Ireland. The Zemindars have been enabled, by the growth of population and its pressure on the soil, to rack-rent the miserable Ryots, and their incomes have grown to several times what they were in the time of Lord Cornwallis, while their land tax remains the same.

Late in the day the Indian Government, after several ineffectual efforts, is seeking to remedy this by the "Bengal Ryots Act," recently passed, which confers fixity of tenure and fair rents upon many millions of people, mostly small cultivators. Their poverty may be judged by the fact that six out of ten millions of holdings pay a rent of less than five rupees a year, say 7s 6d at the present rate of exchange. The population is so dense in some districts that it exceeds five hundred people to the square mile; and as all the land is occupied, and the population is steadily increasing and is averse to emigration, the terrible problems that confront us may be imagined. Over the rest of India the tenure is mostly Ryotwary, that is there is no landlord class between the Government and the peasantry, but the State deals direct with the small cultivators. The custom is to assess the land for periods of thirty years at a fixed rate, and then to re-value and re-assess according as it has changed in value, or as cultivation has extended. The British Government has for many years favoured this system as one that allows the fruits of their labour to go directly to the cultivating class; yet there are large tracts of country scattered all over India where the Zemindary system also exists. In most of these our Government found a powerful landlord class in possession, as for instance in Oude, and thought it best to interfere as little as possible with native customs. Indeed it may be said with truth that every

form of land tenure exists in India, and in some parts the complexity of the system almost baffles description, and I am sorry to be obliged to add, that in all of them pressing agrarian difficulties exist, and it is not an easy matter to say upon the whole which conduces most to the good of the people. At first sight the peasant-proprietor system would seem to be the best, as the produce of the soil feeds only one class instead of two ; but in some parts of India, such as the Deccan, where there are no landlords, the poverty is excessive and the Ryots are all in the grip of the money-lenders. A dead level of poverty is not good for a country, and the existence of a certain number of wealthy men, like the native Zemindars, serves to diversify the rural system and give colour and variety to it. Yet, unless carefully watched, these men too often oppress the peasantry, and it is absolutely necessary that the State should define and secure the rights of the cultivators, as it is now doing all over India.

The great object of the Government should be to encourage the peasantry to improve the soil by better culture, and to secure to them the fruits of their labour. In no other way can the dead level of poverty in India be much alleviated. The re-assessment of the land each 30 years tends, I much fear, to discourage improvements ; it is true that the Revenue regulations forbid taxing tenants' improvements, but it is next to impossible to distinguish them in the prodigious number of small occupancies there are in India, and the general opinion of the natives is that their assessment is raised if they improve their land. They become very frightened as the time of revaluation approaches, and cease to make the most trifling improvements. The Government is always in want of money, and they allege that the Revenue officers are valued and promoted in proportion as they bring in more revenue, and that this constant pressure for revenue

makes it impossible for them to do justice to the peasantry. These complaints are loudest in Bombay; they allege there that recent assessments have raised the rents 25 per cent, though the Ryots are extremely poor. As a rule, the Government officials deny the truth of these statements, and it is very difficult to arrive at the real facts of the case. The same discrepancy exists as to the share of the produce taken by the Government; it is alleged by the Revenue officials to be about 7 per cent of the gross produce, but the natives in many cases assured me it was 30 per cent, and in special cases even one-half, giving me full particulars of the value of the crops and the rent paid. These are the contradictions one meets continually in India. I believe both parties state what they believe to be true, but they adopt different modes of reckoning, and I strongly suspect that much more is taken out of the Ryots than reaches the Government. I was repeatedly assured that the lower native officials squeezed much out of the peasantry by threats of over-assessment. They have it in their power almost to ruin a Ryot by false statements; for the head officials cannot supervise properly the prodigious mass of detail involved in surveying and valuing millions of small holdings. Some idea of the difficulties may be formed from the time it took the land court in Ireland to fix fair rents for about 100,000 cases, and of the dissatisfaction its decisions caused. It is this tremendous difficulty that weighs against all schemes of direct taxation in India. According to Hindoo law, the State is entitled to a share of the produce of the soil. It is not in the strict sense a landlord, as is often wrongly asserted; but, according to the Institutes of Manu, the oldest Hindoo lawgiver, it may take a share varying from one-sixth to one-twelfth of the produce, according to the richness of the soil, and in times of emergency even one-fourth. The British

scale of taxation is said to be much lower than in the old days of the Mahommedan rulers. The records of Aurunzebe—when the Mogul empire had attained its maximum extent—showed that the land revenue was 36 millions sterling, whereas now it is 22 millions, but it is probable that it was never fully collected. Asiatic rulers always demand much more than they get, but our scientific system squeezes out of the people all that is demanded.

It seems of so much importance to encourage the peasantry to improve their holdings, and add to the narrow margin that stands between them and famine, that I gravely doubt whether the Ryotwary districts should be re-assessed at all, and in some of them the amount of tax should be reduced. It were better to forfeit a future increase of land revenue, if it were the means of raising the general level of well-being among the people, and encouraging them to put their savings into the soil. But whether this desirable consummation can be carried out depends upon whether a British fiscal policy shall be forced upon India. It can only be done if a customs revenue be raised, which the whole of India would most gladly pay in lieu of other taxes, which are far more oppressive. Suppose 100 out of the 140 millions of foreign trade, now untaxed, paid a duty of 10 per cent, it would yield 10 millions of revenue, by means of which the land assessment could be reduced and made permanent, while other most objectionable imposts could be removed. It is unfair to impose English ultra free trade ideas upon a country like India. One of the greatest dangers that besets our rule lies in despising the wishes of the natives in such matters. If we are to allow India to have any voice in the construction of her Revenue system it will tend, I have no manner of doubt, in the direction I have indicated.

The main difficulty that confronts us in India is the extreme poverty of the rural population, and the ever present danger of famine. A failure of the rains, which happens periodically, means death to millions, unless fed by the Government, and therefore the first and principal object of the Government is to increase the fertility of the soil, and to provide for the easy transit of food into famine-stricken regions.

This leads me to allude to the need of irrigation. Were it possible to apply to all India the admirable system of irrigation that the Nile provides for Egypt, famines would be unknown and wealth would rapidly increase; but, according to the admirable Report of the Famine Commission (one of the ablest State papers ever issued, and a veritable mine of information on Indian questions) only some 15 per cent of the cultivated soil of India is irrigated, and much even of that fails in very dry seasons.

One of the first duties of Government, where the rule is a kind of paternal despotism, as in India, is to construct canals and build tanks where the conditions admit of it, and, above all, to give every encouragement to the construction of wells by the peasantry. Much has been done of late years, and is still being done, in the way of constructing canals in Northern India along the great waterways of the Ganges and its tributaries, and most successful works have been made in Madras, but after all there is only a small part of the area of India that is capable of so being dealt with, and the more primitive system of tanks and wells must be relied on over most of the country. Nothing strikes a traveller more in the winter or dry weather season than the patches of delicious green vegetation dotted over the parched plains of India. As you approach these green oases, you see in the centre of each a gentle mound, up and down which a pair of bullocks are patiently toiling, drawing a bucket of water

out of a deep well, whose mouth is at the top of the mound. A peasant drives the team, and another empties the pitcher into a channel, which conducts it into the surrounding fields, over which it is spread by many little subsidiary channels. A rich mass of foliage marks the presence of the water, and no famine need be feared in that favoured spot, unless the well ceases to yield. Millions of such wells exist in India, and for practical use they excel most of the engineering works. In Southern India the tank system generally prevails, which is the primitive mode of collecting the water into reservoirs during the rainy season, where the slope of the land admits of it. Unfortunately in some parts of India, such as the Deccan, the subsoil does not easily afford water for wells, and too little rain falls to be gathered into tanks, and chronic poverty seems to be the inevitable fate of the unhappy peasantry. Those wells and tanks are the chief improvement which the Ryots can make in the soil. They are largely constructed by their own labour in the slack season, when there is little field work going on, and the chief help that Government can lend is to give them full security that they shall enjoy the fruits of the extra produce which irrigation yields. I much doubt whether the periodical re-assessment does not discourage the making of these wells and tanks, from the fear that the Government will tax the increased value so obtained. Certainly that view, whether rightly or wrongly, is largely held by the natives.

The other great means of preventing famines is the spread of railway communication, and here our Government has done noble work in the last twenty years. This work, however, must be done gradually, and so as not to burden the finances of India. For several years the existing railway system was a heavy drain on the finances; it is now paying interest, and yields a surplus

revenue ; but we cannot afford to make railways largely in the future without a well-founded expectation that they will pay interest on capital. The strained state of Indian finance leaves no room for making experiments. It is also a mistake to assume, as is too readily done in England, that the railway does away with the danger of famine. The statistics of recent famines show very heavy loss of life in districts traversed by railways. The fact is, when the great bulk of the food crop of a district perishes, and the people have no money to buy imported food, a railway is of no use, unless the Government feeds the people gratuitously. It did so with success in one or two cases of recent famines, but generally it has encumbered the relief with labour tests and other conditions which deprived it of much of its value.

The effective dealing with a vast famine is one of the most tremendous tasks ever put upon a Government. The last Madras famine affected 50 millions of people, and in spite of an expenditure of 10 millions sterling several millions of people died, and almost the whole stock of animals in many districts. If the Government is to cope effectively with these frightful calamities in the future, it must set aside a larger amount of revenue than "the insurance fund" of $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions that is now nominally so appropriated, and this ought to be looked upon as the equivalent of a poor's rate, which does not exist in India. I was informed by many of the natives, that one result of the railways was to clear the country every year of its surplus stocks of grain, and so when famine came to render them more helpless than they were before. In the old times the custom was to bury all surplus food in the ground, and to keep it there till a season of scarcity occurred. In some parts of India, such as the Punjaub, it was alleged that several years' supplies used to be kept in stock. All this has been changed, and now a vast

export trade in wheat and rice has arisen, and, as railways increase in India, so will it export food more and more largely.

This export of food is not looked upon by the natives with the same unmixed satisfaction that it is by our merchants. It is curious to contrast the opposite points of view from which commercial problems are approached by Europeans and natives. To the English mind exports of food, or any surplus products, appear an unmixed source of wealth. To the Hindoo they too often mean a dangerous depletion of the necessaries of life. Neither view is altogether correct, but there is enough of truth in the Indian conception to make us careful of dogmatising about the economy of a country so totally different from our own.

In connection with this I may remark, that nothing impressed me more than the prodigious capacity of India for wheat growing. It is the principal cold weather crop of Northern India, and as you travel through the vast valleys of the Jumna and Ganges, you see hundreds of miles planted with this grain. The cost of cultivation is far below that of Europe or even America. Labour at from 3d to 6d a day, and a land assessment of 2s to 4s per acre gives the Indian producer an immense advantage over the European or American grower, and, as railways spread through the country, the competition of India will be increasingly felt in Europe, and will produce remarkable results.

Before passing from the economical condition of India, I must allude to the tremendous evil of indebtedness among the peasantry. There is only one opinion as to the gigantic extent of this evil. I was assured in the North-West that 90 per cent of the cultivators were habitually in debt to the money-lenders. Probably this may be above the average, but there is no doubt that all

over India it is the rule for the Ryot to be in debt to the village money-lender. It is a difficulty that seems incapable of solution. The Hindoo peasant goes into debt with the same readiness that a child spends its money on sweetmeats. He has no capacity of gauging the future. He will promise to pay any rate of interest to gain some present ease, and not unfrequently the rate charged is one anna per rupee per month, or 72 per cent per annum. Their caste system enormously adds to this evil. It requires them to spend vast sums in proportion to their means on marriage and funeral ceremonies. A man frequently spends on one such occasion a sum equal to four or five years' income, which he borrows from the Bunyea, or village lender. One case was brought before me of a rising young man, an earnest student at college, whose income was seven rupees per month. His father died, and his caste insisted on his spending 1100 rupees in funeral rites. To do this he had to load himself with debt, the interest on which absorbed nearly all his income, and broken-hearted he had to give up his studies and his prospects for life.

I fear that British rule has increased this evil, by imparting our Western ideas of the obligation of all contracts. Our courts of law have, as a rule, up till recent years treated all debts as binding, and enforced their collection by distraint or ejectment when the creditors demanded it. Immense numbers of suits have been brought against Ryots for the payment of debts at usurious interest, and multitudes have been sold out of house and home, and become landless beggars. As we had abolished the Usury Laws in England, we thought it right to do so in India, contrary to the immemorial traditions of the country. We are now retracing our steps, after great evil has been done. The Deccan Ryots Act gives power to the court to reduce debts when the

interest is excessive, and when advantage of an ignorant debtor has evidently been taken. The same principle is gradually being extended to the rest of India, and we are going much more on the lines of ancient Hindoo law, which protects an ignorant debtor against the consequences of his own folly, and forbids his farm and household goods being sold up for debt. The difficulties that surround this question are enormous, for there are innumerable ways in which an ignorant and credulous peasantry may be victimized; but, speaking broadly, I believe that ancient Hindoo customs were much more suited to this primitive people than our advanced ideas of commercial law. I can hardly express my sense of the danger of applying to India the latest forms of European thought. Let the principles of British commercial economy be rigorously applied to India, and in course of time the bulk of the rural population would be landless beggars and paupers. Carry out to its logical issues the principles of free trade in land, in money, in goods, free competition in all departments of life, and enforce by law all contracts, and you will gradually vest all property in India in the hands of the money-lending and trading classes.

The modern conception of England, as of all advanced and commercial nations, is to enlarge to the uttermost individual rights and responsibilities, each person is held to be free to contract himself into any obligation he chooses, the law has no function but to enforce these contracts. Society is looked upon merely as a mass of units, each fighting and struggling for his own hand under the fire of the hottest competition. It is thought to be a law of nature that the weakest should go to the wall. Anything that looks like "Protection" is the rankest heresy. Now the constitution of Hindoo society is precisely the reverse of this—the individual is swallowed up

and lost in the family, the village, the caste. He has hardly any rights of his own, he is more like a member of a community of bees, or ants, or beavers, if I may use the simile. His place in society is fixed for him by birth, his duties are hereditary, his rights and obligations are decided by status, not by contract. He is incapable of contracting for himself upon the hard commercial principles of modern Europe, and to apply to him our conceptions of law is the most cruel tyranny. I believe more mischief would be wrought in India in ten years by applying the theories of our advanced political and commercial doctrinaires than was caused by the invasion of Tamerlane, or Nadir Shah, or the ruthless Moguls. I do not for a moment imply that we have committed such mistakes; a series of great administrators have sought to adapt and improve ancient Hindoo law to the modern needs of India; still most serious mistakes have been made, and will be made again, if we permit modern English ideas to be forced on a country centuries behind us in social development.

The general complaint of the natives is that our elaborate British jurisprudence is not suited for the simple wants of the village community. It is said greatly to multiply litigation, and to stimulate the fabrication of false evidence. Our European judges admit that it is almost a lottery whether or not a right decision is come to, so hopeless is it to get at the true facts of the case. The old native system was to leave a large discretion to the Panchayet, or council of five village elders, who heard cases on the spot, and administered justice in a rude way, from their knowledge of the locality and of the customs of the people. It is now claimed by many that this ancient tribunal should be re-established, with power of settling cases up to a limited amount; and the suggestion is well worthy of consideration.

Indeed many of our best administrators are coming to

the conclusion that we should restore, where possible, more of the old village customs of the Hindoos. They perceive the harm that has been done by breaking them up, and the folly of putting a new patch of Western civilization upon the old garments of Indian tradition. We have succeeded best where we have preserved the integrity of the old village community, as is still the case in the North of India. We have done worst where we have broken it up, and substituted dealing with the individual Ryot. Just as each beaver or ant taken out of its nest is helpless and soon perishes, so in some sense does the Hindoo when cut loose from the props that held him up. British law, I fear, has often knocked down those props in the attempt to build up better, with the only result of undermining the foundations of both.

This leads me to say that one of the greatest recent reforms in India is the extension of municipal government by Lord Ripon. It gives the native population the opportunity of co-operating for schemes of social improvement. All over India a spirit of enterprise has been called forth by this generous attempt; it is true that not much intelligence is yet evinced by the more backward communities, and one hears not a little ridicule of the blundering efforts of these infant governments, but, so far as I could judge, the experiment was working quite as well as could be expected, and I have no doubt will prove a great boon to the people. It will provide a school for education in the art of self-government and self-help, and will gradually educe a class of native administrators who will be capable of holding higher posts hereafter. It is true that for some time these local boards will need supervision, but already in the larger towns, such as Calcutta and Bombay, there is no little public spirit and intelligence displayed, and probably they are ahead of our

municipalities in England before the close corporations were abolished.

One great reform, however, is urgently demanded by the natives, namely, that the control of the trade in intoxicating drinks should be vested in local bodies, and this leads me to observe that one of the greatest abuses of our Government in India has been the extension it has given to the sale of alcoholic drinks. It ought to be known in England that all classes of the Indian population are by nature extremely temperate, by religion as well as custom they are mostly total abstainers, and they regard the vice of drunkenness with the deepest abhorrence. If left to themselves they would not have licensed shops for the sale of the vile alcoholic compounds which come from Europe, in comparison with which our own whisky and gin are comparatively wholesome. But the Government in its desire for revenue, and, ignorant of the consequences, has let out to contractors, or farmers of the excise, the right of opening liquor shops or "out stills" as they are called, and of late years many of these dram shops have been opened in country districts where the taste did not exist before. This mischief is worst in Bengal, and I was often told by the natives that groups of drunkards have been formed in many places where the vice was unknown before. The use of strong European spirits is deadly to the natives of India; it kills them far sooner than it does Europeans, and they have so little to spend that it involves them and their families in beggary. Hardly any worse evil could be inflicted on India than introducing a taste for alcohol, it will, if persisted in, do for the Hindoos what opium has done for the Chinese. They become perfectly mad and reckless when they are addicted to this vice. It is a shameful thing that in the matter of morality our so called Christian Government should fall behind the ethical code of India;

yet so it is, and few things will more certainly undermine our hold on India than this defiance of native opinion. I am told that the revenue officials shelter themselves behind the fiction that it is better for Government to license the trade than suffer it to exist in a contraband fashion. I believe the truth to be that in many cases there was no trade or taste for the article till the excise officers planted the temptation amid an unwilling people. No doubt when the taste is once formed there is an irrepressible craving, which will find some means of gratification, and so the Government may excuse itself now for taxing the trade, but there is all the difference between tempting a people to drink to increase revenue, and seeking to curtail consumption by high duties. If the local bodies of India had the control of this trade, on the principal of "local option," now generally assented to in England, they would either stamp it out, or hold it in check where extinction was impossible. Native opinion is so pronounced on this matter, that it may be trusted to act for the real good of the people, which our paternal Government does not. There is no doubt that the three or four millions drawn from the Excise, and the chronic poverty of the Exchequer, are the motes that blind our eyes to the havoc that is being wrought; and to go further back, it is the injustice of England in forcing upon India a fiscal system unsuited to that country in the supposed interests of Free Trade. I trust the Commission, appointed to inquire into the Government of India, will probe this matter to the bottom, and insist that native opinion shall be fully represented. Had India the voice she ought to have in the management of her own affairs, an end to this iniquity would soon be put.

My remarks hitherto have been directed mainly to the defects of our system of government, and the complaints

made by the educated natives ; but it would not be fair to stop here. Some extremists are trying to make out that British Government has been an unmixed evil to India, and pamphlets are being circulated among the natives, some of them written by discontented Europeans, attributing every ill to our oppressive and alien Government. These writings suppress everything that makes for the other side, and omit altogether to state that the chief causes after all of the poverty of the people are their own social and religious systems, and especially the tyrannical authority of caste. After all, the habits and beliefs of a people have more to do with their welfare than the action of governments. Some of these habits and beliefs are fatal to all prospects of improvement, so long as they hold the people in their iron grasp. Chief among these must be mentioned the inveterate custom of premature marriages. The first thing a Hindoo father thinks of is to get his child betrothed, which is done usually in infancy, and can never afterwards be annulled ; and in the case of a daughter, marriage often actually takes place before the age of thirteen. An unmarried girl of fifteen is hardly to be met with, unless unfortunately a widow, in which case the Hindoo religion forbids re-marriage, and condemns the unhappy creature to life-long ignominy ; it may be that her "betrothed" husband died when she was an infant, unconscious of his existence, yet she is treated almost as if she were an accomplice to his death, and is condemned to celibacy and reproach all her life. I am speaking generally of India, but there are exceptions, such as the Punjaub, where this rule does not apply ; but all over India the rule is for mere children to be married. In going through a school, and asking the members of a class of elder boys to stand up if married, almost every one rose to his feet. I need not add, the social results to the community are disastrous. One consequence is a

great deterioration of physique, and an excessive multiplication of sickly children. The population is increased unnaturally, and a great portion of it is too feeble to maintain itself. The custom is for all the married sons, with their wives and families, to live in the same household, while their father is alive, and it is not uncommon to find forty or fifty relatives living together under the same roof, and often the greater part of them are a burden upon the small number of bread-winners.

The Hindoos are extremely kind in maintaining their poor relations. Nobody thinks of casting off any one nearly related to himself, and so it happens that excessive poverty results from this constant increase of mouths dependent upon others for support. Their marriage customs are a part of their religion; they have no connection with common sense. A starving family marries off its daughters at twelve or thirteen to another pauper family, even though they know the offspring must die of hunger. It is held that a man without a son to perform his funeral rites is shut out from bliss hereafter, and it is further held that a son must take upon himself the burden of his father's debts, otherwise he forfeits his hope of future happiness.

Where this system is in full play amid a poor peasantry like that of Bengal, living on patches of four or five acres apiece, with the land over-cropped and no uncultivated soil to be had, one can conceive how impossible it is to raise their social state. The custom is to subdivide the land among the sons, so that holdings always grow smaller, and the struggle to live fiercer. Besides, there is an immense amount of subletting, and hosts of middlemen, who squeeze the classes below them as they are squeezed by those above them. Where 500 people are living on a square mile, solely by agriculture, and when they will not emigrate, it is obvious that no increase can

take place without reducing the scale of living. A very heavy death rate is inevitable ; it balances the heavy birth rate, and a low state of vitality prevails. The position of things is like that in the West of Ireland before the potato famine ; the land was always being sub-divided more and more as families increased, till the people barely existed on patches of potatoes. So in Bengal, they just exist on rice, which is a prolific crop, and feeds as many people per acre, I suppose, as any other crop in the world.

The recent census of India revealed the striking fact that one-third of the population was under twelve years of age ; probably half the population was below eighteen. Were it not for the high death rate, supposed to be about 35 per 1000, against 22 in England, the Indian population would double every twenty-five or thirty years, and increase in a single century to double the whole population of the globe ! Even as it is, with the abnormal death rate and the great amount of disease, the population is increasing at a rate which will double it in a century, and every sanitary improvement increases this rate. If 250 millions of people have such difficulty in living in India now, one marvels how 500 millions can live a century hence ! There can be no doubt that one effect of British rule has been to prodigiously increase the population. During the incessant wars of old times large tracts of India were laid waste, and enormous numbers of people were periodically cut off by war, pestilence and famine. We have no reliable statistics of the population of all India in former times,* but I have little doubt that the population of India has increased, since the time of Clive, more than in the 2000 years that intervened since the invasion of Alexander. I see no possible solution of this problem, except through a change in the habits and beliefs

* The first estimate made of the population of Bengal, Behar and Orissa was 10 millions, now it is 67 millions.

of the people, and so far only the dawn of that era is perceptible.

But there is another cause of extreme poverty and indebtedness. The universal custom of India is to expend immense sums on marriages and funerals. I have already given an example of this. It is the outcome of the caste system; but so deeply is it implanted in Hindoo nature, that even the Christian converts are unable to rise above it. I was told of one experiment, where all the debts of the converts were paid off in order to start them fair in life, but it was soon found that they were as deeply in debt as before. One of the saddest things is that when the Ryots get occupancy rights from the British Government, that is when they are converted from tenants at will into permanent occupiers, they too often pledge the additional security so acquired, and get deeper into debt than before. The only remedy appears to be to secure by law their land and farming implements from attachment for debt, so that the village lender may have no lien for his advance.

In legislating for India, one has to remember that the bulk of the people are but children, and the Government has to act as a kind but firm father. An admirable movement for social reform is rising into importance among the educated Hindoos. It is partly the offspring of the Brahmo Somaj movement, initiated by the well known Keshub Chunder Sen, and which may be described as an attempt to graft Christian morality upon a basis of theism. Frequent meetings are now being held in all the large towns to advocate the alteration of pernicious caste rules, and urge the abolition of infant marriages, while sanctioning the re-marriage of widows, and encouraging female education. The ice of inveterate custom is slowly breaking under the dissolving influence of Western thought, and a meed of praise and generous support should be given to these enlightened natives, who, at much social

suffering, have dared to emancipate themselves, and are seeking to free their countrymen from degrading bondage.

I have said that the great solvent of Indian caste prejudice is Western thought; and this leads me to observe that the future of India largely, indeed mainly, depends upon education. Nothing impresses a visitor more than the craving of the natives for English education. Wherever schools or colleges are opened they are soon crowded, and the universal desire is to learn to read English. At little village schools, if a European steps in, the pupils will crowd round him to show him how they can read English. Their natural difficulties are very great, some of our sounds they can scarcely articulate, the formation of their throat and palate seems to be different from ours, and it is a work of great labour to acquire good English pronunciation. Yet that difficulty is entirely surmounted by many, and some of the cultivated natives in the principal towns speak English with an elegance and eloquence that few of us could surpass. The great need of India is now primary education; colleges and high schools have been abundantly supplied, but the masses are still far behind, and it is felt that too much has been done for the rich, and too little for the poor. I cannot forbear expressing my admiration for the splendid missionary schools in all the great centres of Indian life. One of them, which I visited, had 1500 youths in attendance; they are better patronised by the natives than even the Government institutions, and that notwithstanding that the first lesson given is always upon the Scriptures. Nothing strikes one as more remarkable than the willingness of the Hindoos to let their children be taught Christianity. They are most reluctant that they should outwardly embrace it, for this involves forfeiture of caste, and a species of outlawry; but they recognize the moral benefit of being taught Christian morality, and prefer it to

purely secular education. Cases have occurred where a Government secular school was started side by side with a mission school, and had to be given up, in consequence of the native preference for the latter.

This raises the great question what is to be the character of the future education of India. A more momentous one was never asked, for, according to the decision taken, India may be a century hence a land of idolators or of infidels, or at least nominally Christian. The whole subject was exhaustively treated by the recent Education Commission, and the general conclusion arrived at was that Government should undertake the function of stimulating and encouraging education by grants in aid to all voluntary schools by whomsoever originated, whether by the natives, European missionaries or others, but should not itself be the direct instructor of the people, except in special cases. There had been formerly much dissatisfaction felt at the action of the Education department, and its attempt to absorb all education into its own hands; but now the voluntary bodies are satisfied, provided the recommendations of the Commission are faithfully carried out. The future of Indian education will therefore depend upon the zeal and energy shown by the various classes of which Indian society consists. The Brahmin, the Brahmo-Somaj, the Mahommedan, and the Christian Churches have all fairplay, and not a little liberality is now being shown by native gentlemen in starting schools.

It may be hoped that the higher and nobler conceptions of life and duty given in the Christian schools will affect largely the whole future of Indian education. There is ground for believing that it will. It is highly valued by the natives of all classes, and its indirect effect is much greater than its direct influence. Very many teachers in the native schools have received their education in the mission

colleges, and a constant stream of trained teachers is passing out of these normal schools and training colleges. The public at home must exercise constant vigilance to prevent these fountains of good for India being injured by official jealousy. There have been, and still are, painful instances of Government colleges whose whole influence is thrown against Christianity. The heads of some of these institutions are pronounced agnostics, and miss no opportunity of instilling scepticism into the youth under their charge. It is often stated in India, that Government colleges turn out clever infidels—men whose whole view of life is merely destructive; it is from these classes that the strongest opponents to British rule proceed. The native newspapers that are most bitter against us are usually edited by agnostics. That contempt for all authority, which commonly accompanies the destruction of faith, is most deadly in India; and one of the great problems of the future is to carry the Hindoo mind safely through the transition period when native faiths gradually decay. If that be so effected as to secure a permanent foothold for Christianity—it may be in some form better suited for an Eastern race than in its European dress—England will have done a work in India of which she may be proud; but if Western thought and science merely act as dissolving acids, and destroy all faith in religion, a terrible chaos may be predicted in India, and its certain revolt from British rule. It may be gravely questioned, whether any benefit at all will be conferred on India merely by pulverizing its ancient religions, without substituting better. Her old faiths, with all their lamentable defects, yet hold society together; they enable multitudes of poor and often suffering people to bear patiently the hard incidents of their lot; they maintain reverence for authority in the breast of millions, and so make it easy for government to be carried on. If all this

binding influence be destroyed, and nothing put in its place, the firm texture of Indian life will be broken to shivers, and such a cataclysm result as the world has seldom seen.

Before leaving the subject of education, I would say that the natives desire technical schools, after the model of those in Europe, to stimulate native industry, and the Government will do well to respond to this demand. India has lost so much of her ancient hand-made manufactures, that it is incumbent on us to give her every chance of retrieving her trade by adopting improved modern processes. No jealousy of her competition with ourselves must hinder us from doing full justice to her aspirations. We must act in this, as in all other matters, as interpreters of the highest and most patriotic wishes of the native community. It is in the long run true self-interest so to do, for such policy alone can bind India to us in chains of genuine affection.

I cannot forbear saying that the Hindoo population are the reverse of exacting; they are contented with small mercies. All they want is fair play, and the consideration of their wishes. They are one of the most patient and contented peoples on the face of the earth. They are naturally courteous, and seldom dream of insulting a white man, unless badly treated themselves. It is a standing miracle that Europeans may travel alone all over India as safely as in any Western country. It is the rarest thing to hear of solitary Europeans, or even their wives and children, when left alone in the Mofussil, being harmed in any way. Much of this is of course due to the prestige of the dominant race, and the dread of swift penalty, but much also is due to the mild law-abiding character of the people themselves. It should be impressed on our countrymen that it is a crime to abuse this unique position they hold in India. Their

treatment of the natives is vastly better than it was in the old days, and most of them, I believe, conduct themselves in a manner worthy of their country, but painful exceptions are to be found. One hears the contemptuous term "nigger" still applied to natives by those who should know better, especially by youths just come from home, and somewhat intoxicated by sudden power. The natives deeply feel the want of courtesy. They are themselves punctilious to a degree. Etiquette is a fine art among them, and it is a grievance of no small magnitude that some Europeans should fail to behave like gentlemen. The flames of war have been lighted before this by social insults, and may be again, and it should be distinctly impressed by the Government of India on all its officers that courtesy to the natives is a cardinal virtue, and that rudeness will bring sharp censure.

It is most unfortunate that since the explosion produced by the "Ilbert Bill" the relations of the two races have become more strained, especially in Calcutta and Bengal. I heard on all hands, both from English and natives, that there was increasing repulsion between them. The newspaper press in Bengal, both English and vernacular, did its utmost to fan the flame, and though it has subsided, the ill feeling is not removed. I pronounce no opinion on the wisdom of the "Ilbert Bill;" it was part of a policy introduced by Lord Ripon from the highest motives. Its object was to raise the status of the natives, and open for them a gradual entrance into the higher posts of the service. This is the true and patriotic policy to be followed in India, and Lord Ripon was only endeavouring to carry out the Queen's proclamation of 1858; but it is alleged by the European community that the "Ilbert Bill" was ill timed, and brought forward in a way offensive to their feelings, and that the substance of the change might have been attained without provoking race an-

tagonism. I venture no opinion on this point; but this I will say, that it is perilous for administrators just come from Europe to legislate on delicate questions involving race feeling. Great complaints are made that men are sent from home strangers to the complex structure of Indian life, but with large powers of legislation, and that just when they are beginning to understand their business and be of use, they return home, having finished their five years' term of office. It does seem in many respects an unwise thing to give the initiative in Indian legislation to men unacquainted with the country and its traditions, and to promote them over the heads of old and trained officials; but it may be said, on the other side, that unless the Indian bureaucracy is controlled from England, it will become despotic, and find itself in increasing opposition to native opinion. I cannot undertake to solve this difficulty. This only I will remark, that the appointments to high offices made from home have a vital bearing upon the welfare of India, and it would be worse than a mistake, it would be a crime, to give them merely as a reward for political service at home.

If the government of India is to become the shuttlecock between parties, and its appointments the prize of the sharpest tongue and the smartest intrigue, we may bid farewell to all hope of permanently holding that country. Now that India is rapidly growing in political knowledge, it judges of those appointments very differently from what it used to do, moral qualities count for far more, and a governor to be esteemed must be worthy of honour, and if he is worthy he will receive it. I cannot forbear stating that no Viceroy in recent times has evoked loyalty among the natives as Lord Ripon did; his name has quite a magical power over the Indian mind. Unhappily, this view is the reverse of that entertained by the Europeans, and it is deep matter for regret that one who has done so

much to bind India to England should have got so little support from his own countrymen. Mistakes may have been committed from over-haste, or want of accurate knowledge, but one thing is undoubted. When the crisis of a Russian war seemed imminent, Lord Ripon's policy made India loyal from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, whereas the previous Viceroyalty left it in a state of smouldering disaffection. The time has fully come when we must realize that our strength in India depends upon the goodwill of the natives. To make and keep India loyal counts for more than to have a strong frontier, and to secure that loyalty, we must govern India increasingly in accordance with educated native opinion. We shall not find any want of support among the natives in resisting foreign aggression. The aim of the new India that is coming into existence is not to exchange one foreign ruler for another, but to mould British rule into accordance with Indian requirements. They wish to make Anglo-Indian government what the name implies, that is, a mixture of English and native administration. They recognize that England has given the first impulse to the new life which is now throbbing in India. They believe that she can confer much greater blessings on the country if she will give fair play to native aspirations, and they know that her strong hand alone secures internal peace, and protects against external invasion, and it does not enter their minds to cast off this powerful guardian, and risk the anarchy that is sure to follow.

It is not forgotten by the Hindoo population that they had little justice at the hands of the Mahomedan invaders from Central Asia. For many centuries India was to those cruel marauders what the later Roman Empire was to the Northern barbarians. They swooped down from the Afghan passes, and ravaged with fire and sword the fertile plains of Hindostan. As soon as British

rule is removed the same thing would happen again, and all educated Hindoos know that well.

But there is one element of permanent disaffection I fear among the Indian population. The Mahomedan descendants of the ancient Moguls still behold at Delhi and Agra the departed magnificence of a great empire. The Taj at Agra, the immortal work of Shah Jehan, is without exception the most exquisite piece of architecture in the world. Europe has nothing to equal it. The vast mosques and mausoleums of the Mogul Emperors, their huge fortresses, the gigantic ruins of deserted cities which encumber the plains for many miles around Delhi, speak of the grandeur of an empire which was only second to that of ancient Rome. It were vain to think that the descendants of those who created this empire can love their conquerors. There is too much evidence that the ancient centres of Mahomedan authority are still far from friendly to the Power that supplanted them. Nor have the Mahomedans profited as the Hindoos have done by British education; they long stood sullenly aloof, and refused to enter our schools, and so the path to advancement was seized by the Hindoos, and they have the mortification of seeing their former subjects rising above them in the social scale. I am glad to think that this opposition to modern ideas is subsiding, and in some places Mahomedans are sending their children more freely to our schools and seminaries; but it will be long before old memories pass away, and the new order of things be heartily accepted. The Mahomedans are believed to number about one-fifth of the population of India; but many of those are only Hindoos (whose forefathers had been forcibly converted) slightly varnished over. Such is much of the population of Eastern Bengal; they are not fanatical Mussulmen of the Arab type. It is chiefly in the Punjaub and North-West Provinces, especially at

Delhi, the old Mogul capital, that disaffection is still active.

The army that keeps in order this vast country, and overawes those centres of disaffection, is singularly small, considering the work it has to do, and it cannot safely be decreased; nor, on the other hand, would it be prudent to burden India with further military expenditure, for she is a very poor country. The universal native opinion is that we should on no account waste their resources on expeditions beyond the frontier; but they agree in the expediency of the frontier railways, and in the fortification of that natural boundary of extraordinary strength, which nature has given to Hindostan. If India has ever to defend herself against foreign invasion, our true policy would be to throw ourselves more heartily upon native loyalty than we have done hitherto, and I believe it will respond to the occasion.

I will add, in conclusion, that the future guidance of our Indian Empire will task to the uttermost British statesmanship. New problems will constantly present themselves, demanding rare wisdom and tact to solve discreetly. We have to conduct India successfully through the various stages that separate a subject province from a self-governing colony. It is only at present capable of feeble progression; education and intelligence touch as yet but the fringe of its 250 millions; thick darkness still broods over the deep, and no one would propose dangerous experiments on a people who have never known since the world began any government which was not despotic. What we have to do is to absorb into our system the best native thought of India, and generously to welcome the aid it can give us in administering the country. The time is past for considering India as a close preserve for a profession. The new wine of Indian life must be put into the new bottles of a more liberal policy of rule. Deep

interest is felt in India at the appointment of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry. It is much to be desired that this inquiry should be thorough and impartial; above all, that it elicit fully native opinion. It is much to be desired that, like the Famine Commission, it should hold its sittings in India; but, if that be not possible, ample facility must be given for native witnesses to come before it and tender evidence. Justice would seem to require that eminent natives of India should sit on the commission—there is no difficulty in finding such men. If that be not practicable, the next best thing is to give these men the fullest and fairest hearing. Great good will arise if these principles be followed; but if they are not, much soreness and discontent will be felt in India. In this, as in all things, “honesty is the best policy,” and the fullest and frankest investigation should be courted.

In the foregoing remarks my sole object has been truth. I have sought to state both sides of the case fully, even at the cost of some apparent inconsistency. If my remarks seem to bear hardly upon our administration of India, it is not because I seek to injure it, but to improve it. We have no need to be ashamed of the work we have done in India; but that work will improve in quality, and yield nobler results in future, just in proportion as it is brought within the scope of healthful criticism.

